

Abstract

CLASS VIOLENCE AS TRAUMA

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My submission for this workshop comes from a combination of personal experience and my professional interactions with daily wage cyclists and low-income residents, during a community engagement led alternative mobility and accessibility project called 'Aapki Sadak' in Delhi, India, between 2012 and 2015 (<https://shaktifoundation.in/report/reclaim-urban-neighbourhood/>).

As I read through the Call for participation in this workshop, I noticed a potential gap in the framing of both 'trauma' and 'cycling' that I believe, is central to understanding the difference between western conceptions of urban cycling and practices of cycling prevalent in the global South. Cycling, in so far as it continues to only be associated with "transport, sport or leisure", does not account for the myriad ways in which people's livelihoods are supported by it. Cycling for income generation or existential needs, expands the purview of how we view cycling in urban contexts the world over, but specifically brings attention to cycling practices of the global South. This, subsequently, has a significant bearing on the definition of trauma as it relates to cycling; trauma which then extends beyond the physical act of cycling and enfolds socio-economic aspects of cycling within its purview.

My contribution to the workshop looks to expand both, the conceptions of cycling, and trauma, to highlight the ways in which daily wage and low-income cyclists in Delhi experience micro-trauma daily, especially as cycling for leisure and commute among the urban elite has gained popularity. Everything from the quality and model of the machine to the time of day/week that one cycles, and the different geographies of cycling, reflect one's class and status as a cyclist. For many low-income cyclists, these differences in perceived class and status inflict a type of ongoing class violence that manifests itself as trauma, that remains unexplored and unaddressed. I will build this case through my personal observations and conversations with cyclists during a cycling event organized by our team in Malviya Nagar, an urban precinct in Delhi, as well as during my visits to the popular Raahgiri Day in Gurgaon (India's first sustained car-free day - <https://wriroscities.org/media/photo-essay/raahgiri-day-gurgaon-india>).